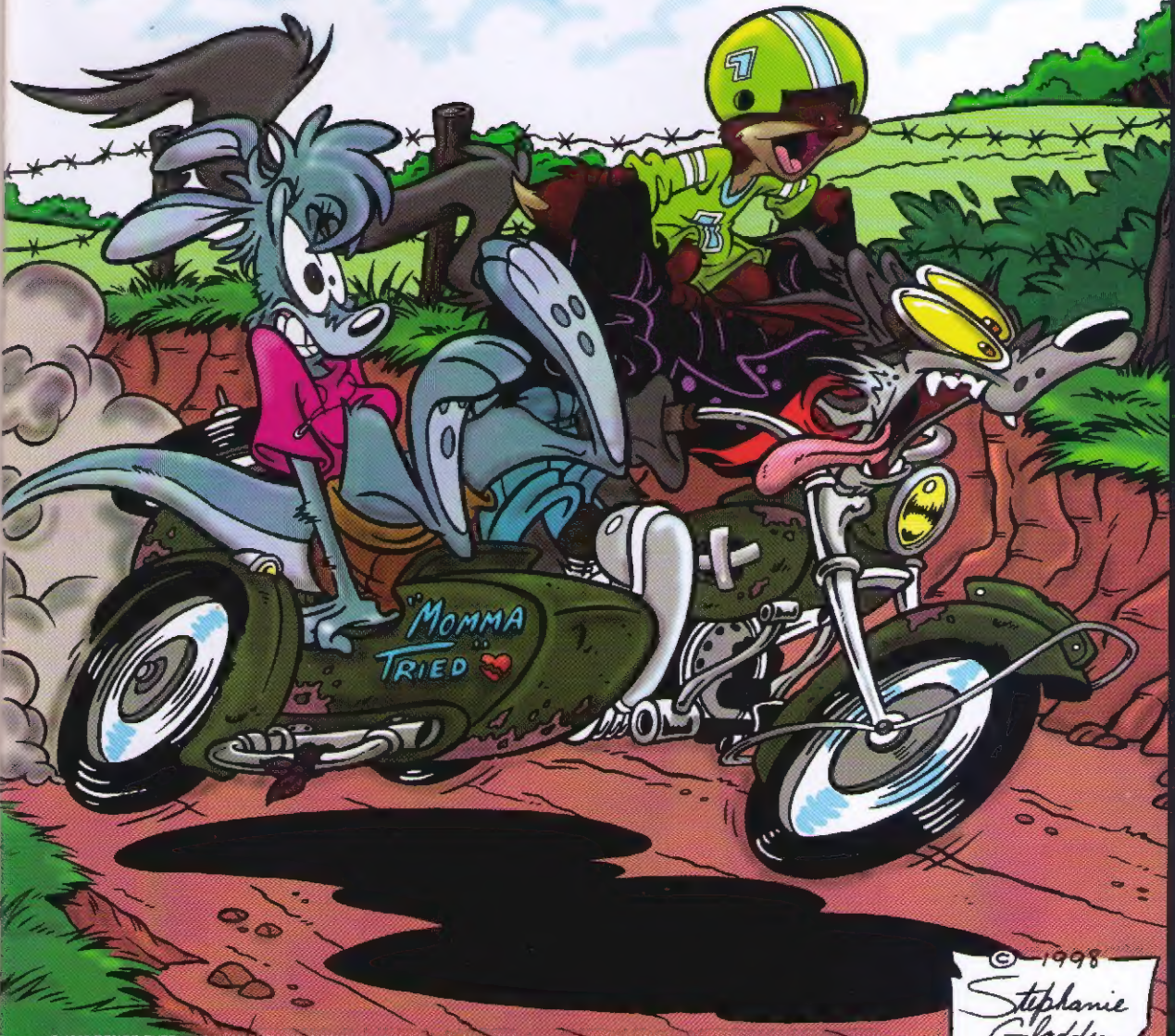


COMICS
BONGO
GROUP

#1
US \$2.95
CAN \$4.15

HOPSTER'S • TRACKS •



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*Stephanie
Gladden*



MELBA'S MAIL POUCH

Post all flowers, brickbats, or what-have-you to:

or do the electronic thing to:
hoptrack@aol.com

Hopster's Tracks
Action-Packed Studio
PO Box 941007
Atlanta, GA 31141

Hi There! Welcome to the first issue of *Hopster's Tracks*! It's been quite a long road getting here. I have some folks I'd like to thank, so if you find this sort of stuff dull (and who could blame ya?), feel free to skip ahead a couple of paragraphs....

For starters, Sarah Dyer (Read *Action Girl*!) first liked and printed the Hopster's Tracks gang in her great anthology. Dan Vado (Buy *Slave Labor Graphics* comics!) saw them and was very nice and encouraging. Afterwards Scott Gimple (Watch *Pepper Ann* on ABC!), who was then still at Bongo, became my champion. I designed a logo, which was inked by pal and animator extraordinaire Robert Pope (Animate Your Next Project at *CLICK 3x*!). Jason Grode and Matt Groening (Watch *Futurama*!) sufficiently dug the pitch, and Terry Delegeane (Make Mine Bongo!) picked up the banner and ran with it, being encouraging and cajoling in just the right measure. To all of you, a huge thanks!

Other folks have seen *Hopster's Tracks* develop along the way, and have offered words of wisdom and encouragement, such as: my pal Patty Liedy (Read *Zero Hour*!), fellow Bart-Simpson-Hair-Point-Counter Bill Morrison (Buy *Roswell Magnets*!), Bongo stablemate and great phone-pal Mary Fleener (Read *Fleener*!), and good friend and fellow Trader Vic's connoisseur Paul Dini (Watch *Superman*!).

Wait, there's more! Comic Strip King Bill Holbrook (Look for *Kevin and Kell* on the Internet!) saw the characters very early on and offered encouragement. Marcus Lusk (Read *Tales From The Bog*!) gave me a nice plug in his book, as did Jeff Smith and Vijaya Iyer (Buy *Bone Magnets*! Have them battle your *Roswell Magnets* on the fridge!) after I witnessed the grand Cow Race at Pogofest! Peter Bagge (Fill in your *Hate* Collection!) has always had time to yack. Joe Rosales (Seek out his stuff!) has always had envelopes of cool drawings to send to me; and Mark Schultz (Read *Xenozoic Tales*!) has been a great correspondent since we met in Savannah. Heidi MacDonald (Read *Disney Adventures*!) and Sue Rose (Watch *Pepper Ann* again!) have been swell to me, and have been understanding that I couldn't draw stuff for them while I worked on this book. Ditto for Bronwyn Taggart (Read the *Cartoon Network Presents* books from DC Comics!) -- hope ya'll will have me back! Finally, Evan Dorkin (Read *Dork*!) was one of the first friends to be in earshot when I excitedly announced that Hopster's Tracks would be published -- he turned and said "Crash 'n' Burn!" -- I've been trying to live up to these words ever since! Another Big Thanks to one and all!

Oops -- I can't forget my comrades in **Friends Of Lulu** and in the **National Cartoonists Society** -- join an organization today! You won't regret it!

Oh, and a big "Hi!" to my neighbors down the street at Gaijin Studios!



The first two *Hopster's Tracks* stories appeared in *Action Girl Comics* #9 and #10. I'll probably reprint them sometime in this comic (no doubt at some point when Old Man Deadline is giving me the business). There's no tellin' when that will happen, though, so go out and look for them! *Action Girl* is an anthology comic full of cool and varied stories, so what are you waitin' for? You know the drill -- ask your favorite comics merchant!

Here are some folks who wrote in after seeing the first two stories --

Hello, Stephanie! I recently saw your stuff in *Action Girl* #9, the "Fashion Plates" story featuring Melba & Spence. I really enjoyed it, even though it was only four pages. The storyline was humorous, and the artwork was superb! Artwork that may look deceptively "simple" to the untrained eye, but actually is quite accomplished, especially in your execution of inking. No extensive cross-hatching or anything like that, just solid smooth line-work that is "heavy" or "light" where it's needed. Definitely impressed me. Your characters were good, too. It's nice to see a girl character in the "Funny Animal" genre, a gender that far-too-often goes neglected. Spence was cute.

I can definitely see the animation influence in your work! Have you done any animation, or has your work for the major companies basically been regular linework?

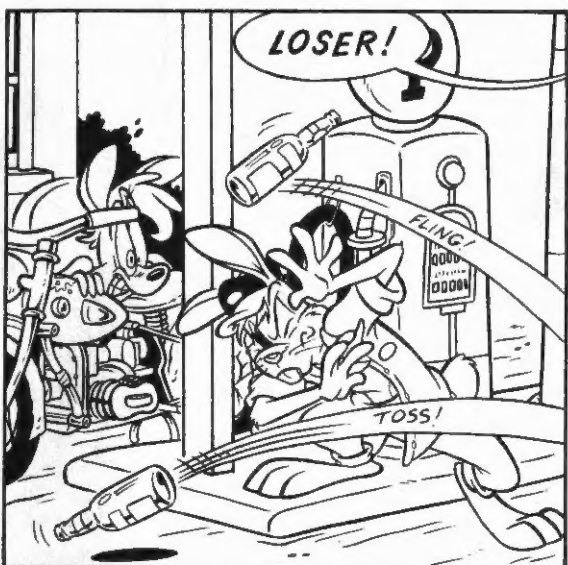
Shawn Granton
Southbury, CT

Thanks, Shawn. Yep, I've served some time in the animation biz. I can tell any aspiring cartoonist out there that there's no better training ground than animation. I try to keep a hand in cartoons -- I've recently done some storyboards for Disney Television's *Pepper Ann* show. I'm glad you liked Melba and Spence!

(continued on back cover)

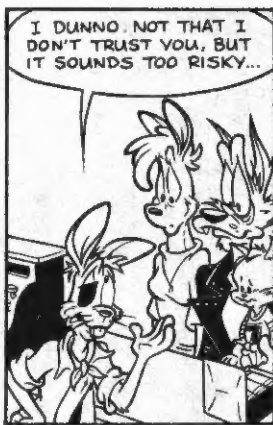
THE LAST AMERICAN EYESORE



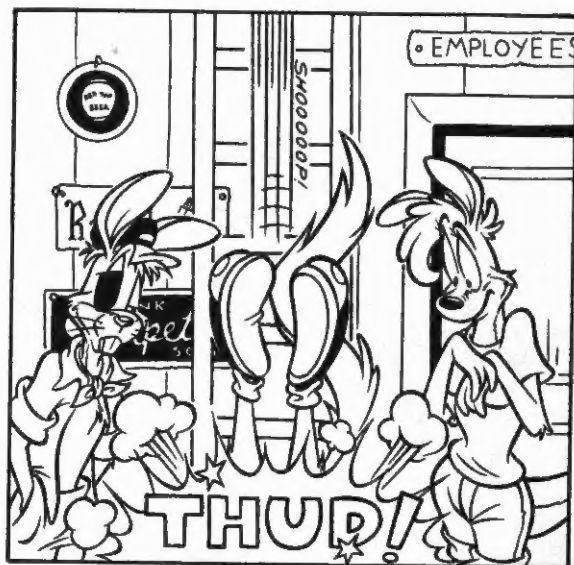




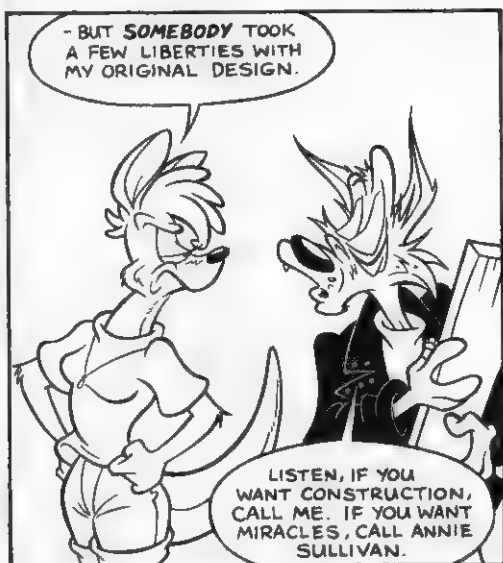






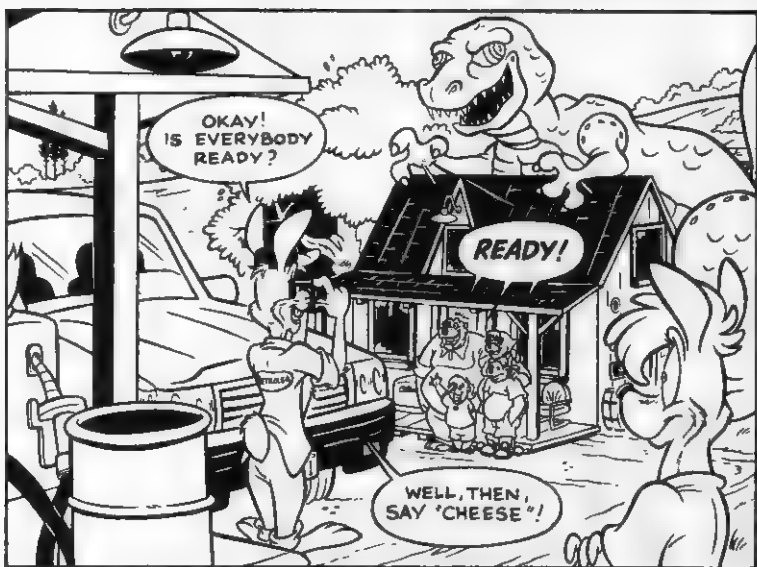
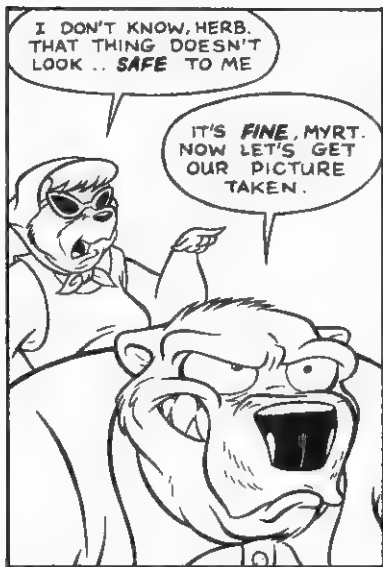


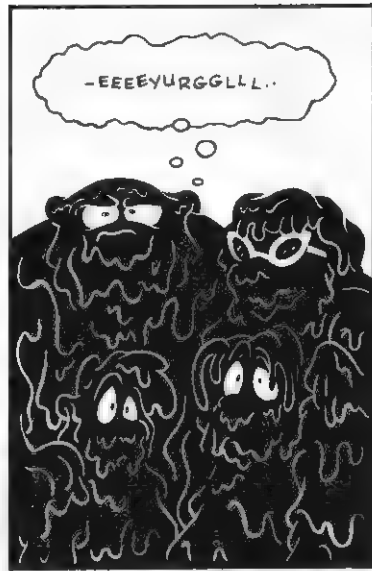


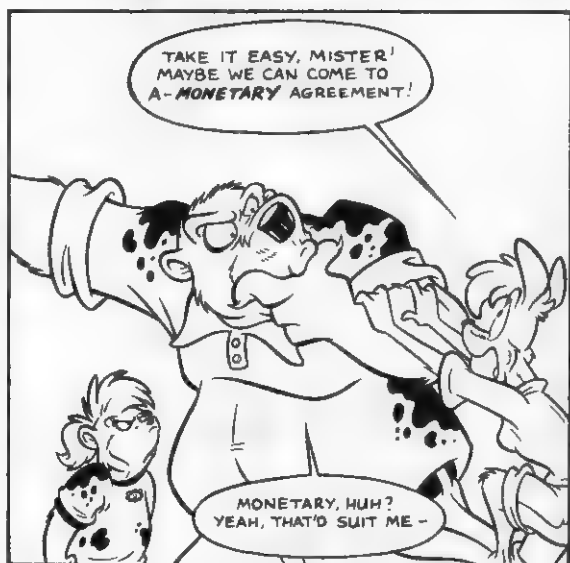


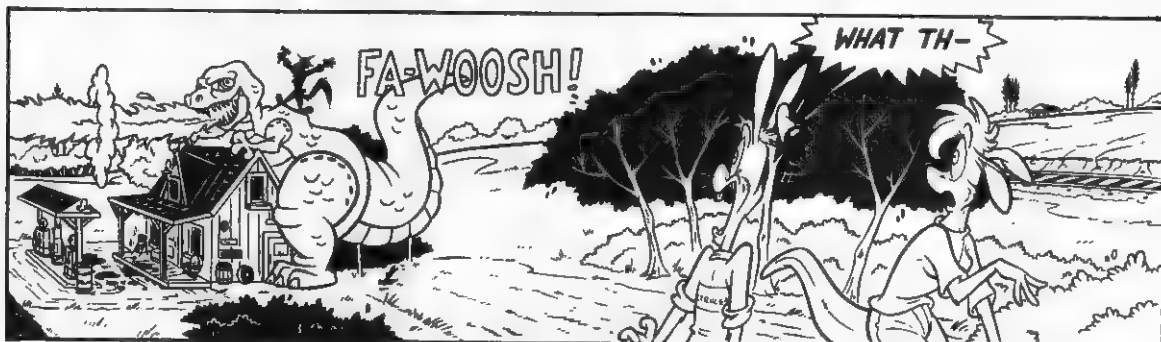


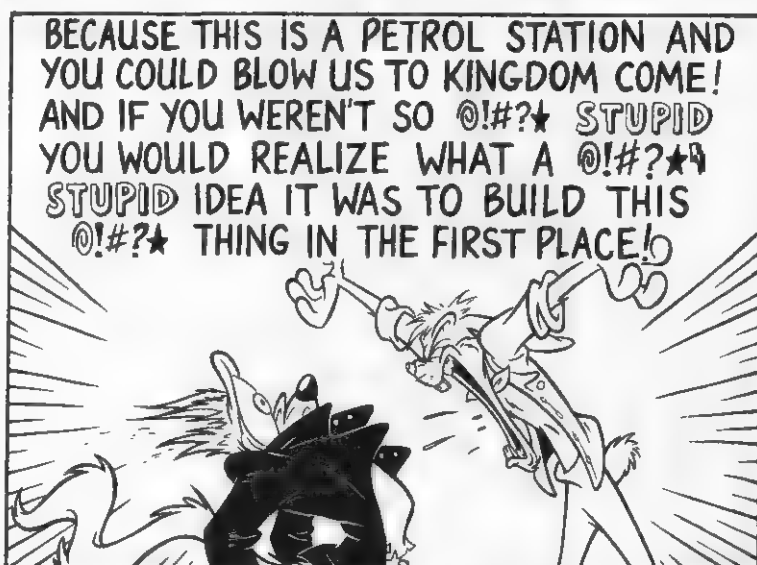
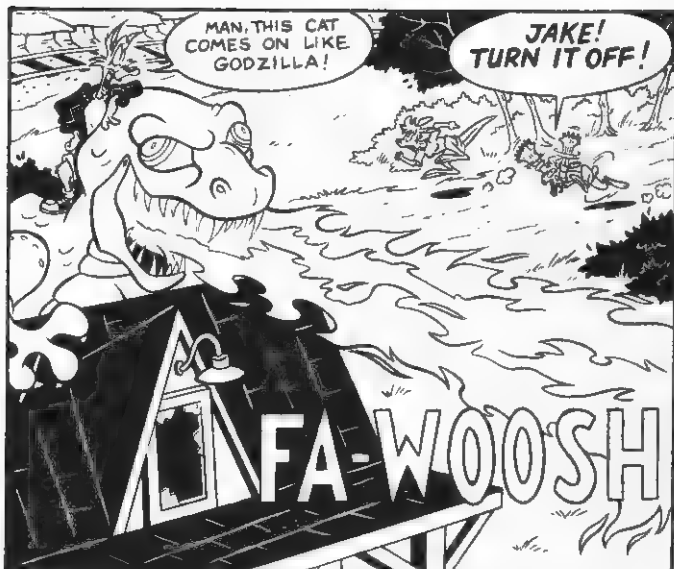




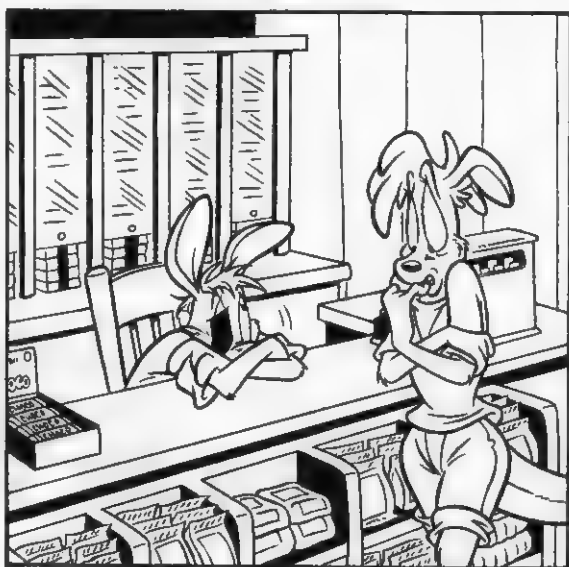
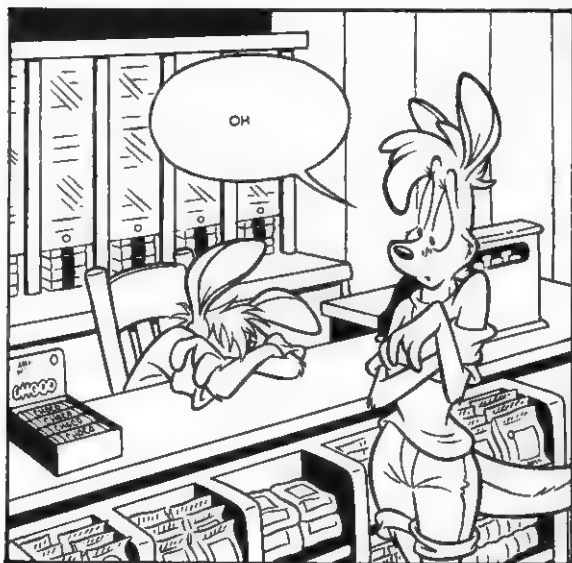
















THE NEXT DAY.



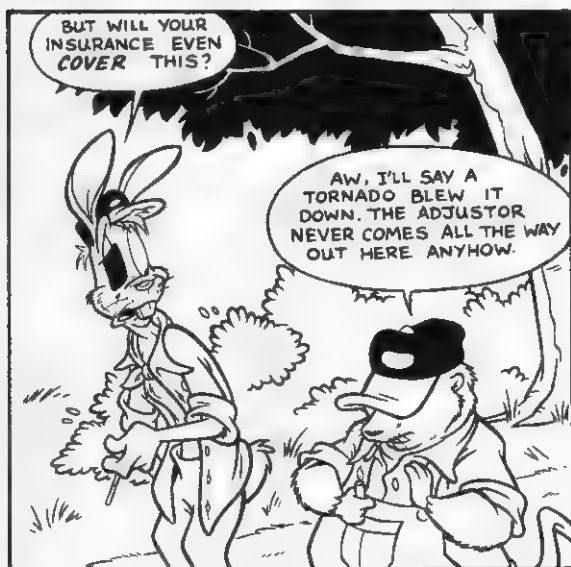
YESSIR, MR. HARRIS.

WAHL, DOAN WORRY ABOUT IT. THE PLACE IS INSURED. HERE, YOU LOOK LIKE YOU NEED ONE OF THESE



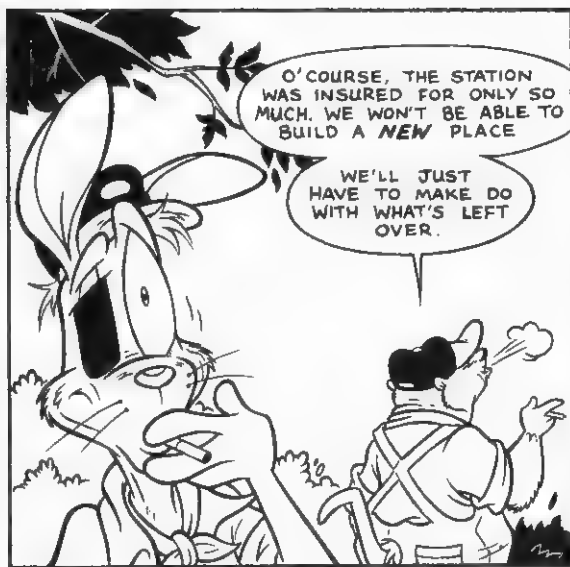
BUT WILL YOUR INSURANCE EVEN COVER THIS?

AW, I'LL SAY A TORNADO BLEW IT DOWN. THE ADJUSTOR NEVER COMES ALL THE WAY OUT HERE ANYHOW.



O' COURSE, THE STATION WAS INSURED FOR ONLY SO MUCH. WE WON'T BE ABLE TO BUILD A NEW PLACE

WE'LL JUST HAVE TO MAKE DO WITH WHAT'S LEFT OVER.



AND SO



WELL, AT LEAST MR HARRIS DIDN'T CLOSE YOU DOWN

YEH



ROSWELL FACE TO FACE WITH THE FIENDISH FANBOY FROM THE FUTURE!

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of the four-time
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Nominated

ROSWELL
LITTLE GREEN MAN



I've read your Hopster's Tracks stories & think they're soooo cool. Very action packed in a non-"action" comic kind of way. Do you think you'll be doing more?

Christa D'leer
via Internet

I hope so, Christa. And Congratulations! You win my one-time-only, official No-Prize! You couldn't have known it when you wrote your note, but for the last couple of years I have informally called my studio "Action-Packed Studio," and a year ago I made it official with Mr. Taxman - how did you know?

Dear Stephanie, ...You are truly one of my favorite cartoonists. Ever since I first saw your work in the Powdered Toastman Special I was completely blown away. Your line is so crisp and clean and your characters are drawn with such expressiveness. I loved the Melba and Spence story in Action Girl. My only complaint would be that after four pages I was thirsty for more. I hope to see you do more Tex Avery Comics in the future (your rendition of Wolf & Red is fabulous). I'm sorry if this letter sounds like endless butt kissing, but you really are a superb artist and I just wanted to let you know how much I appreciate your work.

Michael Bresnahan
Greendale, WI

Hey Michael, thanks for the kudos. That's a compliment especially considering how talented you are yourself! (Check out Michael's *Dim-Witted Darryl*, new from Slave Labor -- I got a sneak preview a year ago, and as you know by now if you've picked it up, it's really cool!) The Powdered Toastman book is a blur to me. I have no idea how I drew a 48-page comic in such a short time. Wolf & Red was a dream job! I'd love to do more Tex Avery comics, but apparently they only buy 'em in France!

Dear Stephanie, I recently saw your work in Action Girl Comics #11 and really enjoyed it. Fantastic cartooning!! Great story, beautiful artwork & humorous plot. I'm interested in checking out more of your comics. Where else have you been published?

Nayiree Roubinian
Goleta, CA

P.S. I loved your character KAYOKO! She's funny, strong, tough & kicks ass. Yahoo!!

Hi Nayiree! Don't worry that Kayoko doesn't show up in this story. She'll show up again soon enough, along with her brother Mac and their father, Daikichi.

Hey Stephanie, I wanted to tell you how neat it was to see you at Pogofest in October. I had heard you got your own book at Zongo, but it was good to see Hopster's Tracks for myself. Is [it] going to be a collection of short stories or a continuing narrative? Just curious.

John B. Ludwick
Savannah, GA

Hi John! Hopster's Tracks will most definitely be a bunch of shorter stories. I can't picture Jake or Alky embarking on an epic journey of self-discovery spanning several years and issues -- they're more the drunken-road-trip types! Pogofest was a blast -- it's well worth the trip to Waycross just to see the beautiful Okefenokee swamp. I'll probably be going back this year.

I think you're ready.

Solomon Russell
Oakland, CA

Humm.

I've also gotten other cool notes, and I'd like to thank Robert Osborne, Tom Narey Jr., Sonny Lemmons, Jason Thomas, Rick Causey (3 nice letters), Spencer Morrison, Don Roberts, Toivo Rovainen, Gib Bickel, Jeff Ottaviani, Bryan Irrera, Sally Miller, Brian Reynolds, Michael Williams, Ligia Abuabara, Mohamed K. Hassoun, John Stothfang, Dan Scheraga, Joe Boyle, Brian Hance, John Palagyi, David Drew, Duane Parton, Joe Buzz, Scott Ball, and everyone else who took time to drop me a line (even if I dropped the ball and misplaced their name!)

Last but not least department: Finally, I'd like to dedicate this issue to my husband John Miller for his patience and encouragement. Living with a cartoonist is not an easy thing.

NEXT ISSUE: Melba and Jake both find themselves having lots of grown-up automotive misery in "Car Trouble" -- will they find justice in this world? Find out in Hopster's Tracks #2!

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